

J. ROCKETT AUDIO DESIGNS

GTO

REVIEW BY **DAVID A. EVANS**

STREET PRICE **\$199.00**



The GTO is the result of a collaboration between J. Rockett Audio Designs and Guthrie Trapp, a fantastic guitarist who works in and around Nashville. Trapp and Rockett took inspiration from the Nobels ODR-1, an overdrive pedal favored by many guitarists in Nashville. The duo opted for a more restrained interpretation of the Nobels: less overall distortion, a bit less low-end, but with enough power to cut through the mix. Trapp's good taste evidently translates well into pedal design, because the GTO is a great little overdrive that ably produces tight and bright distortion, boost,

or even dark and heavy distortion.

Like Rockett's other pedals, the GTO comes in a seemingly-indestructible metal housing. The pedal feels like it can be dropped from a great height without inflicting more than cosmetic damage to it. And the simplicity of the interface, with its Level, Gain, Accent, and Warmth knobs makes dialing in the right tone easy.

The Accent and Warmth knobs can be adjusted for a bit of tone sculpting. While the Accent knob acts as a mid and high boost or cut, the Warmth circuit adds or cuts out a signal's mid-

low range. Many pedals offer EQ knobs, but most aren't set up as the GTO's are. With the GTO, if you want more warmth, you simply turn up the Warmth knob. On another pedal, the user would have to turn down a knob that controls the level of the higher frequencies to give the impression of warmth. This difference between the GTO and other pedals might seem unimportant to some readers. However, the simplicity of the design allows users to more intuitively locate the right tone. If someone needs more highs, just add it in with a twist of the Accent

knob. It's really that simple.

In lower Gain settings, the GTO will act as a boost. Adjustments of the Accent and Warmth knobs allowed me to dial in chimey, shimmering tones that jumped out of the amplifier. Turning up the Accent while leaving the Warmth down low produced a thinner but still desirable sound, while adding in Warmth gave the overall sound more weight in the lower end of the spectrum. Personally, I preferred the chime of the higher Accent setting with just a bit of Warmth dialed in to help add power to my arpeggios and noodling.

At moderate-to-higher gain settings, the GTO delivered a restrained, rich, and ear-pleasing distortion that retained the musicality of the cleaner, bell-like settings. The GTO excelled in producing a well-balanced distortion that didn't really ever feel like it buried anything in a formless muck. Adding in a bit of Accent gave the pedal a bit more of that chimey feel, one that brought to mind the tone

of Stevie Ray Vaughan. On the other hand, dialing back the Accent in favor of more Warmth lent the GTO a more brooding, heavy sound that encouraged Sabbath-like riffing. Perhaps best of all, the GTO added sustain with a light touch. It's not going to squeeze your signal as some ultra-fuzz pedals will, but that's not what the GTO is about. The GTO, like Trapp's playing, is about finessing the tone so that it matches the moment. The GTO is about as transparent an overdrive as they come.

J. Rockett Audio Designs made a wise choice in collaborating with Trapp—the man has great ears. If readers haven't seen Trapp's playing—and this writer hadn't until demoing the pedal, do a quick search online. You will be happy to hear the man's fluid and affecting playing. Trapp has chops, but he also has good taste, which is an asset that is, let's face it, sometimes in short supply in the world of virtuoso guitarists. It's this good taste that will make readers want to keep the GTO on their pedalboards

rather than telling it to GTFO.

WHAT WE LIKE

Great, transparent overdrive that adds the perfect amount of sustain.

CONCERNS

This thing might injure feet if it's dropped upon them.